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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

DEPT PASS: GUATEMALA (2)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC

REVIEWED BY *Eliz* DATE

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED
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FROM

DATE: April 10, 1969

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: Chart of Incidents, March 1969

REF :

Summary

Although the overall level of violence remained within the normal limits, the last week of March gave evidence of a sharp upturn in both the pace and seriousness of activity. Security forces ascribed most of the attacks to "common criminals"; but had no success in capturing the culprits. Increased military patrolling in the Northeast and the Northwest produced no concrete guerrilla traces. The capital's leading newspapers railed against the rise of criminality, but knowledgeable Guatemalans tended to attribute many of the attacks to subversives anyway. At the end of the month the first signs of renewed tension were beginning to appear.

1. The charted data show a gentle increase in the nationwide monthly rate to about mid-way in the normal span (35 incidents; normal between 20-50). The sharp rise in Guatemala City is partially accounted for by at least seven alleged car robberies in which drivers were forced into the trunks of their vehicles and driven about the city. However, in only one case was there any direct link between the theft and a subversive attack. Since the victims came from all across the socio-economic spectrum--from taxi drivers to respected physicians--the robberies have a disproportionate psychological impact. Other incidents were considerably more serious, especially as the month drew to a close; assassinations took place in various parts of the country.

2. In Guatemala City subversives can be given credit for an attempted robbery at the Sports Palace (the band fled when they assumed an ambulance siren heralded the arrival of police), the assassination of two Mobile Military Police and a young girl on March 31, the firing at a National

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Police Patrol car on the 4th, and several of the car robberies. Other attacks, possibly related to subversive activity, include an attempted bombing of the home of the Director of the Agrarian Bank, an attempted shooting of a leading businessman and some of the more successful robberies.

3. At least five kidnappings during the month came under police investigation, but nothing linked them with the subversives. Mysterious, indeed, was the disappearance of two youths distantly related to MLN/PID presidential candidate Col. Carlos ARANA. The two were picked up in different parts of the city by men assumed by onlookers to be Judicial or other plainclothed police. Security forces denied holding the youths who showed up unharmed at their homes three days later. They had no press statements. One particularly intriguing rumor in the bizzare incident attributes the kidnappings to a group of discredited police officials who hoped to curry Arana's favor by "locating" the missing boys and claiming that they had snatched them from the hands of guerrillas.

4. In the Northeast, vigilantes may have been responsible for the deaths of two brothers in different parts of the Zacapa area. Otherwise, vigilantes are thought to be much subdued. But there were reports at the end of the month of a well-organized band, dressed in olive green, that was said to hold secret meetings at night, stage hit-and-run attacks and to terrorize local finca owners with extortion threats. This band was given credit for the mutilation and killing of one finquero who refused to pay off some \$3,000. The press also attributed the previously unreported existence of "various bodies" found floating in the Motagua River to this group. Military forces in the Zacapa area have increased their patrolling in an effort to make contact with the guerrilla band believed operating in the area, but have found no traces of them to date.

5. The assassinations of two administrators of national fincas in the Escuintla area (one was the administrator of the Presidential farm Santo Tomas) seem to have political overtones. The manager of La Polonia had been named as one of the individuals who mistreated his workers in an issue of GRITO POPULAR, the publication of the FAR (PGT) Southern Command in January 1969, and this unit is probably responsible for his death. This group, however, is not believed responsible for the other murder which conceivably was not politically related.

6. Meanwhile, violence continued in the overcrowded INTA-administered area at Nueva Concepción. As pressures build up on this land, title disputes and personal vendettas add to the lawlessness associated with a frontier town. The massacre of four local leaders and threats that 66 more would be similarly tortured and murdered prompted a massive military sweep of the area. Although security forces arrested 100 persons, most were undocumented Salvadoreans who were deported; the organized criminal bands generally escaped.

7. Top security officials have twice alluded to political considerations in the rising crime rate--attributing it to "political groups interested in

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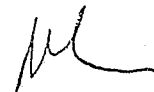
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creating a climate of intranquility for political purposes"--a clear reference to the MLN's claim for a "law and order" president to control delinquency. An MLN spokesman, caught in this "stopped beating my wife last week" dilemma, did remark that his party was not involved. We have no evidence linking Rightist political groups with criminal activity but such a rumor is bound to flourish in Guatemala in light of the political violence of recent years.

8. As the Easter Season, with its virtual moratorium on all activity, approached, it was difficult to assess the psychological environment. Clearly, the year-long respite in political violence gave many confidence that the insurgent threat had been reduced to insignificance. Last month a group of businessmen reported to police that they had received extortion threats from the FAR; a few years ago such a reaction would have been incredible. Security forces have played down guerrilla participation in all public statements, stressing that common criminals are responsible. Nevertheless, many knowledgeable Guatemalans realize that the key guerrillas have not been apprehended and have been awaiting a resurgence of activity. While they tend to give insurgents too much credit, neither police statements nor press editorials have ameliorated their apprehensions.

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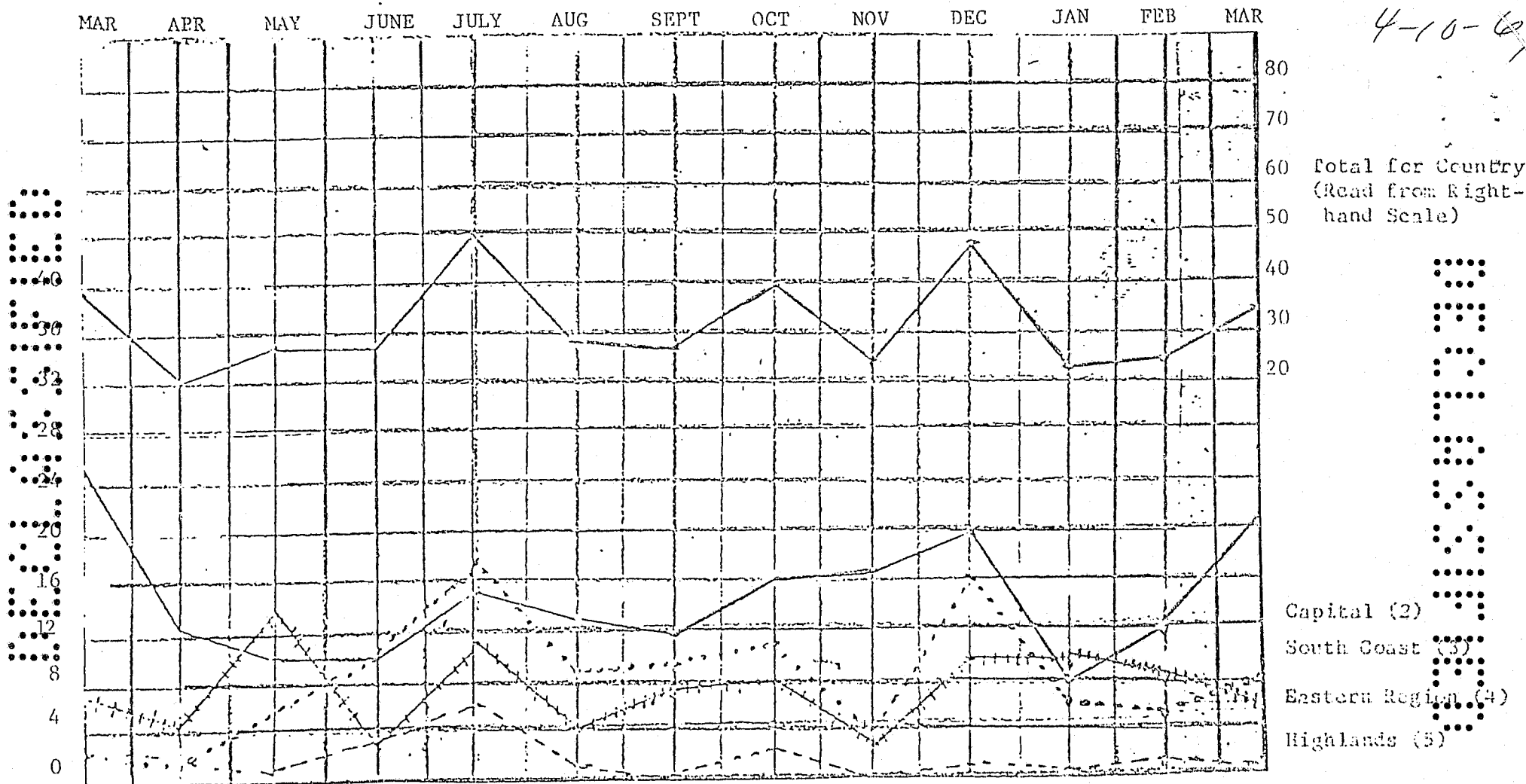
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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST RELATED INCIDENTS BY REGION
March 1968 - March 1969

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Guatemala

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1. For purposes of this graph both acts of violence, such as shootings, bombings, etc., and assassinated bodies found are counted as incidents.
2. Capital Area includes Departments: Sacatepequez, Guatemala.
3. South Coast includes Departments: San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa
4. Eastern Region includes Departments: Jutiapa, Jalapa, El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal
5. Highlands includes Departments: Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola

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